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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002450

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INR/R/MR, NEA/PPD, NEA/PPA, NEA/AGS, INR/IZ,  
INR/P

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,  
GOVERNMENT; BAGHDAD

1. SUMMARY: The major themes in the daily newspapers on June. 9 were the Badr Organization's conference, Arab Sunni participation in the constitutional committee, and the developments of the security situation. END SUMMARY.

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- 1A. "Familiarity" (Al-Sabah, 6/9)

Al-Sabah (independent) published a front-page editorial by Muhammad Abdul Jabbar about the National Assembly's meetings:

"Transparency of political life in democratic regimes means that the citizenry must be informed about the decisions of the parliament. It is simply improper to make political discussions behind closed doors. In Kuwait, for instance, journalists and citizens that wish to attend parliamentary sessions are given their own private seats to view the events. In Britain, parliamentary meetings are broadcast live on public television. This way, millions of people in these countries are aware of what is being discussed in their respective parliaments.

In Iraq, the National Assembly members are the elected representatives of the people. Iraqi citizens have a right to be informed about their representatives' discussions and decisions. As a result, the people will be able to monitor and analyze the performance of their representatives in order to ensure that they are living up to the people's expectations. There is no need for secret sessions of the parliament unless there is an urgent state of affairs that requires they be held secretly for the sake of protecting our national security. It is acceptable to make these particular sessions secret, but only if certain matters are discussed that cannot be disclosed outside government circles.

Nonetheless, the Iraqi National Assembly is not an ordinary commission. It is a foundational assembly that is responsible for preparing the draft of the permanent constitution. The Assembly was elected for this very purpose. However, until now, the National Assembly's sessions and discussions have been far from public knowledge. At times, assembly members have disclosed information to the media outlets that are hungry for knowledge. This scenario only sheds light on the fact that public opinion is ignorant about what is really going on inside the National Assembly. The constitutional committee must address this issue because it is tasked with a mission that is more important than that of the National Assembly. For the sake of the political process and the transparency of democracy, the assembly members must allow journalists to attend the assembly's meetings. The Assembly must allow citizens to attend these sessions and it must broadcast these sessions live on Al-Iraqiyya television. In addition, the National Assembly must publish the transcripts of its sessions."

- 1B. "The four portfolios" (Al-Bayyan, 6/9)

Al-Bayyan (affiliated with the Islamic Dawa Party led by Al-Jafari) published a front-page editorial about the developments of the political process in Iraq:

"Without a doubt, the major developments that Iraq has witnessed after the elections have provided good reasons for the neighboring countries to reconsider their relationships with Iraq. Among these developments include the formation of an elected government and the continued forward progress of the political process. The neighboring countries must help Iraq by making progress in four major portfolios. The first portfolio revolves around stabilizing security because this issue provides the foundation of the

Iraqi political process. Indeed, stabilizing security at the present time is extremely important because this stage will witness the constitution-drafting process, which will ultimately lead to stabilization in Iraq. The second portfolio for these neighboring countries is to open embassies in Iraq. This issue has become increasingly important, especially after the formation of an elected Iraqi government that has the ability to act on an equal footing with its neighbors. For this reason, we call on the neighboring countries to enlarge their diplomatic representation in Iraq.

The third portfolio concerns the issue of debt. The neighboring countries must cancel the debts owed to them because these debts belong to the former regime. Our neighbors must cancel these debts because Iraq is unable to pay them. In addition, canceling these debts will improve Iraq's relationships with these countries. The fourth portfolio that requires action on the part of Iraq's neighbors is reconstruction. The neighboring countries will certainly benefit from participating in the reconstruction of Iraq and it will pave the way for further cooperation. If the neighboring countries do not participate in Iraq's reconstruction, other countries from outside the region will certainly seize upon this opportunity. In closing, we call on the neighboring countries to develop good relations with Iraq. We hope that these relationships will satisfy the willpower of the Arab people and ensure mutual Arab cooperation that is based on the unity of language, religion, and destiny."

SATTERFIELD